

A HISTORY OF CITIZEN PLANNING EFFORTS IN BERKELEY

by K. Berva
Roy Cameron
Jerome Lubin
Norman Muedoch
Charles Woodward

City planning 212
Department of City Planning
Berkeley, California

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Berkeley Needs Citizen Action

"The survey made by the committee....has shown the unfortunate results of failure to plan for the future. Lost opportunities are milestones of such a policy.... But happily, there are many splendid opportunities before us. Our failures are of importance chiefly to make our citizens realize that we inevitably shall be compelled to write 'too late' again unless we grasp these opportunities now...."

These words were true when Duncan McDuffie said them in 1926 and they are true today. Little purpose is served in continually regretting what might have been. A city's growth reflects its people. As more and more citizens concern themselves with planning to meet the needs of Berkeley, Berkeley will be changed to more nearly meet their needs. It is not simple, it is not easy, but it must be done.

THE EARLY PERIOD, 1865-1920

Olmsted's College Neighborhood Plan, 1865.

Berkeley had its origin when it was decided in 1862 to establish the state college in the East Bay area. As a result of this action, Frederick Law Olmsted, America's leading landscape architect and planner, was commissioned to present a land improvement plan for the new property of the College of California. As was the practice in other states, funds for the College were to be realized from the sale of part of the site, then valued at \$18,600.

In 1865, fresh from his designing and execution of New York's famed Central Park, Olmsted was faced with the task of presenting a general plan for the College and surrounding areas. The trustees of the College had already partially subdivided the 124 acres on a gridiron basis and had sold lots. Olmsted prepared his report with this handicap. In addition to plans for the college site, surrounding residential areas, parks, and an "avenue to the landing" on the Bay, an added feature of the plan was his proposal for a "pleasure drive" between Berkeley and Oakland. Piedmont Avenue partially fulfills this function. Olmsted's vision was to little avail as his plans for the residential districts surrounding the campus, and the parkway to the Bay were never followed. The execution of his proposals for many parks and playgrounds for Berkeley would have placed the city in a vanguard position when the need for such facilities was just beginning to gain recognition elsewhere.

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The Park Plan of 1907.

With the discarding of Olmsted's proposals general interest in community development waned. The efforts of a small number of farsighted persons, who did try to secure parks and playgrounds for Berkeley met with little success in the face of public apathy.

In 1907, a number of interested citizens met at the Hillside Club and formulated a program for the development of parks and playgrounds throughout the city. The plan envisaged the purchase of the tract known as "Thousand Oaks", some 25 acres in West Berkeley, as well as land adjacent to each school site, and the provision for a civic center. Only \$3,000,000 would have been necessary to purchase land which today is valued at between \$30,000,000 and \$50,000,000.

The plan was submitted to the electorate, but private landowners raised the cry of "increased taxes". Aided by a large war chest, they succeeded in preventing the required two-thirds approval, although a majority of Berkeley's citizens cast their votes for an improved city.

The citizen group that sponsored the measure is typical of the groups generally found hard at work on matters of city improvement. Civic and religious organizations, the University, public officials and private citizens--all were represented by active individuals. Such a broad grouping of people with a common aim was able to wield an influence far beyond that attributed to numerical strength. Their strength had its source in the trust of the community.

The Hegemann Report, 1914-15.

In 1913, the People's Institute of New York, a private organization interested in civic affairs, prevailed upon Werner Hegemann to come to the United States from Germany. Dr. Hegemann was one of the world's foremost planners and his work has served as an inspiration to many who have since been interested in planning. Through the efforts of Mr. Duncan McDuffie (Berkeley) and Mr. Walter Leimert (Oakland) enough money was raised among the citizenry to bring Dr. Hegemann to the East Bay.

Intending to stay but three weeks, Dr. Hegemann was so impressed by the latent possibilities of the "Continental Side of the Bay" that he remained more than five months! Unlike many of his contemporaries, Dr. Hegemann was no mere city "beautifier." His report emphasized the importance of planning for economic and social development and was based on an intensive study of the conditions and needs of Oakland and Berkeley. Written in non-technical language, the report is full of constructive criticism, sound suggestions, and practical advice.

Dr. Hegemann did not attempt to determine specific locations for the improvements he deemed necessary. Instead, his report was presented as a comprehensive picture which could be used as a guide in future city planning. The correctness of this viewpoint was emphasized by the constant referral to it by later planners for the area.

Dr. Hegemann's outlook was apparent in the manner in which the report presented the subject matter. Landscaping, parks, playgrounds, civic center, and public buildings were treated as functional parts of the entire community.

The proposed development of Berkeley's waterfront as a harbor and for recreation was based on the belief that the people should have easy access to their "glorious waterfront on one of the most beautiful bays in the world."

The Hagemann Report received backing from the Chamber of Commerce, the Commercial Club of Oakland, and the City Club of Berkeley, and was published in 1915 with financial assistance from both local governments.

Bond issues to carry out the proposals for the civic center and harbor improvements were not approved by the necessary two-thirds majority of the electorate. Dr. Hagemann's work was not completely wasted, however, as bonds for the construction of new schools successfully hurdled the charter obstacle. It was as a result of his report that the Berkeley Civic Art Commission was established. As time has gone by, the functions of the Civic Art Commission have been changed to meet the more complex needs of the city, and today it is known as the City Planning Commission.

THE MIDDLE PERIOD, 1920-1944

The Keeler Plan, 1923.

In 1923, Charles Keeler, a noted writer and poet, proposed a plan of development for Berkeley. A radial street pattern emanating from the civic center and the establishment of a large park as a buffer between an industrial area near the Bay and the rest of the city were the main features of this "paper plan" and no official action for its implementation was taken.

The Committee of Sixteen Report, 1925.

In 1925, Mayor Frank G. Stringham appointed the Committee of Sixteen. Composed of private citizens and city officials, this group, under the able chairmanship of Mr. McDuffie, studied what it felt would be the needs of Berkeley in the coming decade. The report dealt with the waterfront, public health, parks and playgrounds, the civic center and public buildings, public utilities, transportation, highways, and airports.

John C. Nolen, an outstanding planning consultant, was engaged by the City of Berkeley to review the committee's findings. Although endorsed by Mr. Nolen the report never found its official way from the city council to the planning commission.

When the University of California petitioned the City of Berkeley for permission to expand southward in 1929, the council again called upon Mr. Nolen. Nolen's favorable recommendation was accepted and he took this opportunity to point out the importance of a master plan for Berkeley and of a regional plan for the San Francisco Bay Area. No action was taken on these recommendations.

The Committee of Thirty-Six Report, 1929.

This committee was appointed by the mayor in 1929, but its program was much more limited in scope than that of the previous committee of sixteen. It attempted to deal with the needs of the various city departments. It is most noteworthy for the fact that almost no one connected with it remembers very much about its functioning and lack of results.

The Hall-Olsted Regional Park Report, 1930.

As the need for recreational space became more acute, attention was turned to the excess land owned by the Municipal Utility District. This land consisted of former idle holdings of the East Bay Water Company, and of some watershed areas no longer required by the Utility District following the acquisition of water facilities in the Sierras.

In 1928, the East Bay Metropolitan Park Association, the Oakland Park League, the East Bay Regional Planning Association, and similar organizations were formed to determine what surplus land was available for park use, and also to create public interest in the project.

Civic organizations, by resolution, requested that the surplus lands not be sold until public sentiment could be determined. A preliminary survey in 1929-30, conducted by Ansel F. Hall, of the National Park Service, showed that these lands were admirably suited for recreational use and further study was recommended.

Under the active leadership of Professor Samuel C. May, of the University of California Bureau of Public Administration, a voluntary committee publicized little-known information and succeeded in obtaining

a grant from the Kahn Foundation to carry out its investigatory work. Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr., of the well known planning and landscape architecture firm of Olmsted Brothers, and Ansel Hall were retained to conduct the full study and to make recommendations.

The regional system envisaged in the report was composed of park reservations, forest reserves, wilderness areas, and other recreational facilities. Land acquisition costs for the large project so near the urban centers were proportionately lower than those found in many other metropolitan areas. These lowered costs resulted from the topography of the land, which was too rugged for successful commercial or residential development.

The committee itself was divided as to the type of administrative body best suited for the proposed regional park system. Professor May desired to have the Utility District retain title to the park lands, but was opposed by those who felt that an independent park body should control and own the land. The latter view prevailed, and the regional park project was subsequently approved by the electorate.

In 1942, August Vollmer, acting manager of the Regional Park District, secured options on much excess land still owned by the Utility District. The addition of these lands would have gone far towards the completion of an arc of green about the East Bay. This proposal was placed "under advisement" and no action has been taken. Recently, however, the Utility District has indicated that it does not desire to sell as much land as had been previously optioned, and acreage costs have more than doubled.

THE POSTWAR PERIOD, 1944-1949

The Citizens Postwar Advisory Committee Report, 1944.

The Committee on Economic Development, a national organization of business men, was the moving force behind the establishment of citizen postwar advisory committees throughout the nation. Such a group was formed in Berkeley to present recommendations to aid in the readjustment of economic activity to peacetime conditions.

The report dealt with problems of transportation, student housing, city facilities, and the like. It would have been of more value if the subjects had been treated in somewhat greater detail.

The Chamber of Commerce Report, 1945.

More successful in thought and execution was the effort by the Berkeley Chamber of Commerce. Each committee set up by the Chamber concentrated its efforts upon one field, and thus, while complete integration is lacking, there is good factual material in the report series. Subjects studied included population, business needs, housing, and the urgency of overall planning.

The report on housing is especially significant in two respects. Firstly, it points out that the average unit rental for 1940 was "more than the highest paid Berkeley worker could reasonably afford to pay". Secondly, the report makes clear that Berkeley must have multiple apartment units. "Our next expansion must be upward! This is the only type of expansion left to take care of the normal growth of the city in the future, and these apartments must be built to appeal to the type of citizens which Berkeley desires to acquire."

A Brighter Outlook.

The chances for planning in Berkeley are looking up. The city council, the city manager, and the planning commission have cooperated to secure a well qualified city planner to carry out planning policy in the city. In October of 1949 a full-time Director of Planning assumed the task of setting an enlarged staff to work on the planning problems of Berkeley. For the first time there will be continuity in the formulation of policy and the carrying out of program. The trained planner can accomplish much in Berkeley, how much will depend on the support planning receives from the community in general.



PLANNED CHANGES WILL IMPROVE BERKELEY

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The following compilation represents the published and unpublished sources of information used in this study. All items below are to be found at the library of the Bureau of Public Administration, University of California, Berkeley.

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Introduction

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of various factors on the growth and development of the human body. The study will focus on the relationship between nutrition, exercise, and the overall health of the individual. The research will be conducted over a period of six months, with data collected at regular intervals. The results of the study will be presented in a series of reports, which will be made available to the public.

The study will be conducted in a controlled environment, with all participants being of similar age and sex. The participants will be divided into two groups, one of which will receive a specific diet and exercise regimen, while the other will receive a standard diet and exercise regimen. The results of the study will be compared to determine the effects of the different regimens on the growth and development of the human body.

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